

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of:

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|--|---|-----------------|
| THE APPLICATION OF COLUMBIA GAS OF |) | |
| KENTUCKY, INC. FOR AUTHORITY TO DEVIATE |) | CASE NO. 97-319 |
| FROM 807 KAR 5:006, SECTION 25(5)(a)(1)(c) |) | |

ORDER

On July 18, 1997, Columbia Gas of Kentucky, Inc. ("Columbia") filed its application requesting authority to deviate from 807 KAR 5:006, Section 25(5)(a)(1)(c).¹ The proposed deviation would authorize Columbia to inspect class two curb boxes at the time meters are changed or removed. By its Order in Case No. 96-010,² the Public Service Commission ("PSC") approved a 5-year pilot plan which permits Columbia to test and replace meters on the basis of sampling in lieu of the required periodic meter testing.

On January 25, 1989, Columbia was granted a deviation from 807 KAR 5:006, Section 25(5)(a)(1)(c).³ Columbia was authorized to categorize its curb boxes as follows:

¹ 807 KAR 5:006, Section 25(5)(a)(1)(c), requires that all curb boxes be inspected for accessibility at intervals not to exceed every 15 months, but at least once every calendar year.

² Order entered in Case No. 96-010 on May 16, 1996, The Application of Columbia Gas of Kentucky, Inc. for Approval of a Statistical Sample Meter Test Plan for Residential, Industrial and Commercial Class Meters Pursuant to 807 KAR 5:022, Section 8(5)(c).

³ Order entered in Case No. 9907 on January 25, 1989, The Application of Columbia Gas of Kentucky, Inc. For an Order Authorizing Deviation from 807 KAR 5:006, Section 23(4)(a)(3).

1. Class one curb boxes include the following:
 - a. All curb boxes required to be installed under 807 KAR 5:022, Section 9(17)(a)(1);
 - b. All curb boxes connected to service lines with indoor meters; and
 - c. All curb boxes connected to service lines that serve designated buildings such as schools, buildings of public assembly, and buildings in a business district.

2. Class two curb boxes are those curb boxes that are not class one curb boxes.

Columbia was authorized to inspect class one curb boxes pursuant to 807 KAR 5:022, Section 9(17)(a)(1). Class two curb boxes would be inspected for accessibility at 5-year intervals during the service line leakage survey.

The Commission finds that inspection of curb boxes for accessibility is worth the cost. Inspecting curb boxes for accessibility and operability is essential in protecting lives and property. Historically, fires have broken out at locations where utility employees have failed to locate the curb boxes. Curb boxes are essential in isolating buildings in emergency situations. For example, in some gas explosion incidents, buildings have collapsed on the gas meters, making it crucial that curb boxes be accessible and operable.

Columbia contends that 4,200 class two curb boxes are inspected annually through the service orders for removing or changing meters. Columbia maintains that its accessibility inspection program has revealed that only a very small percentage of the curb boxes inspected have been found to be inaccessible or to require any maintenance. In 1996, only 242 curb boxes out of 73,109 were found to be inaccessible or to require maintenance.

Columbia is currently installing excess flow valves ("EFV") on new service lines on systems operating at a pressure greater than 10 pounds per square inch. Columbia asserts that EFVs minimize the need to locate curb boxes in emergency situations.

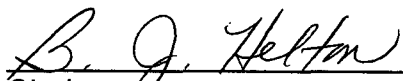
The Commisison finds that curb box inspection through unscheduled meter removal is not sufficient to provide safe, reliable, and efficient service to Columbia's customers. An EFV may enhance the safety operation, but it is not considered a substitute for a positive shut off valve or a curb valve in the safety codes.


After consideration of the record and being otherwise sufficiently advised, the Commission finds that Columbia's application to deviate from 807 KAR 5:006, Section 25(5)(a)(1)(c), should be denied.

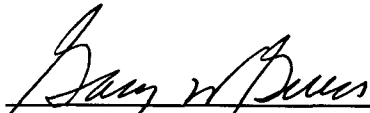
IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that Columbia's application to deviate from 807 KAR 5:006, Section 25(5)(a)(1)(c), is hereby denied.

Done at Frankfort, Kentucky, this 16th day of March, 1998.

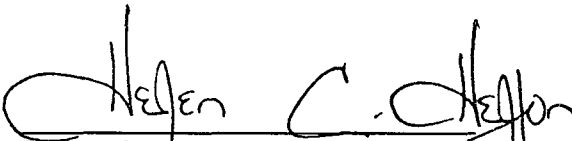
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION


Chairman


Vice Chairman


Commissioner

ATTEST:


Executive Director